Against the current
A minor field study on alternative media in Guatemala

Julius Copcutt
Against the current

A minor field study on alternative media in Guatemala

Julius Copcutt

Abstract

Tales of contemporary society, and who gets the right to tell them, is in this internet era something in motion as new platforms for sharing and getting information have arisen. Where traditional media through newspapers, radio or television has historically been so dominant, more and more voices can make it through as access to new platforms increase. In Latin America and in Guatemala, traditional media has been in the hands of the few and the powerful, concentrating economical and political influence that’s wielded through the power of discourse. Seeing this as hegemonic and representing a society where all are not included, alternative media seeks to counter such discourse and power by telling the untold stories by those historically without voice. This study picks up the perceptions, experiences and views of journalists and activists reshaping what we know about media production and the world, all this in a setting, a moment in time in Guatemala, when the structures of hegemonic power are shaken and put into question. By interviewing representatives of a wide scope of the alternative media sector, this thesis gives account for their aims and contributions as well as the general role and importance of alternative media in Guatemala. What it shows us is that alternative media is perceived as a force changing and adding to narratives about prior marginalized issues in the media as well as countering hegemonic power by contributing to empowerment of the citizenry. This study also show us that alternative media is perceived to open up the space for public opinion to a wider group of people in society and that it has a part to play in monitoring media power. Through these conclusions we gain a better understanding for counter hegemonic voices, ideas and movements and their part to play in society.

Keywords

Alternative media, Internet, Guatemala, hegemony, independence, media power.
Contents

1. Introduction .......................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1 Introduction ..................................................................................................................... 1
   1.1.1 Aim of the study ......................................................................................................... 3
   1.1.2 Research questions ...................................................................................................... 4
   1.1.3 Disposition .................................................................................................................. 4
   1.2 Theory and definitions .................................................................................................... 4
       1.2.1 Hegemony and counter-hegemony ........................................................................... 5
       1.2.2 Theorizing alternative media .................................................................................... 6
       1.2.3 Alternative, Radical or Citizen media? ..................................................................... 6
       1.2.4 Independence .......................................................................................................... 9
   1.3 Method and material ....................................................................................................... 9
       1.3.1 Qualitative research ................................................................................................. 10
       1.3.2 Constructivist approach and objectivity .................................................................. 10
       1.3.3 Method .................................................................................................................... 12
       1.3.4 Semi-structured interviews ...................................................................................... 12
       1.3.5 Qualitative content analysis ..................................................................................... 13
       1.3.6 Materials .................................................................................................................. 14
       1.3.7 Sampling .................................................................................................................. 14
       1.3.8 Interviews ................................................................................................................. 15
   1.4 Validity and reliability ..................................................................................................... 17
       1.5 Choice of case .............................................................................................................. 18
       1.5.1 Sampling .................................................................................................................. 18
       1.5.2 Selection ................................................................................................................... 18
       1.5.3 Journalists and activists ............................................................................................ 21
       1.5.4 Experts ..................................................................................................................... 22
       1.6 Limitations .................................................................................................................... 23
   1.7 Prior research and own contributions ............................................................................. 24

2. Background and media context ........................................................................................... 25
   2.1 Counterhegemonic: A history ......................................................................................... 25
   2.2 Media context ................................................................................................................ 27

3. Swimming against the current ............................................................................................ 29
   3.1 Alternative and traditional media: What differs? ............................................................ 30
   3.2 Purpose and aims of alternative media .......................................................................... 36
   3.3 Perceived Impact ........................................................................................................... 41

4. Concluding notes .................................................................................................................. 45

References ............................................................................................................................... 50

Appendix ................................................................................................................................... 54

Coding scheme ......................................................................................................................... 54
1. Introduction

1.1 Introduction

In recent years the use of the Internet as a media platform, as well as people’s source for finding information, has literally exploded. The access to news and analysis is now of global proportions at the same time as those producing media content now have the opportunities to reach out to much larger audiences. But not only the traditional mass media, competing for readers and offering advertising space to ensure revenue, are reaching readers with the help of the world wide web. With the Internet, more and more options are given as to where to find news and information and alternatives to the dominant media houses is an ever-growing fact.

In the light of this new mediascape, alternatives to hegemonic discourses on politics and prioritized stories by the traditional media power are now being offered with the possibility to potentially reach a much greater audience that may well extend national borders. Not only are these “new” channels changing who has access to the information but also who can produce content and reach out with it through these relatively new platforms. This has the potential to challenge traditional concentration of media power in way we are not used to, as it opens up for new actors and a potentially much bigger scope for the readers to chose which sources to consult, whenever and wherever.

Since the anti-globalization protests at the World Trade Organization summit in Seattle 1999, independent media giving voice to different types of movements using the Internet as a forum have increased. In the Latin American context, the use of the internet and alternative media and communication channels used by the Zapatista Movement for National Liberation in southern Mexico, is probably the case that has enjoyed the most focus and attention. But not all such counter hegemonic voices represent a movement but can rather be seen as democratic forces advocating change from a journalistic point of view. More cases could be mentioned but research has yet to define the overall need for - and meaning of – alternative media and alternative ways of interpreting and describing society. There is a need for, as Couldry and Curran put it, […] “further detailed work on the specific factors that enable or constrain challenges to media power in specific local conditions within the increasingly global frame of Internet-enhanced communication space” (2003:14).

This being a global phenomenon but taking place in numerous localities simultaneously, each region or country will have its own specifics and development.
In Latin America, the tendency is that the mainstream media historically has been in the hands of, or controlled by, political and economical elites. Or as described by Virginia Melián; “The Latin American mainstream media are fundamentally dominated by a commercial logic that privileges the representation of political and economic powers” (Melián, 2012:15).

Both under authoritarian rule and during more democratic times, pluralism and diversity has seldom been accurate words to describe the organization or content of the media in Latin America. As can be said for the intimacy with the state and the limited independence from prevailing interests in many countries with a history of repressive military rule. Although in private hands, “the fact that media conglomerates emerged under the auspices of dictatorships and authoritarian rule clashes with the existing assumptions that private ownership entails distance and autonomy from the state” (Guerrero and Marquez Ramirez, 2014:8).

With the increased possibility to contest such media power, the study of alternative media spaces becomes fundamental to understand contemporary political life and ideas not represented in mainstream media. As mentioned before, the unique local societal conditions are of importance if we are to analyse these new media phenomenon being shaped, and shaping the world.

Guatemala still being a country in a state of democratic consolidation process, and in some ways even progress, and is still very much marked by the many long years of brutal military rule, makes for an interesting case to study through the eyes of the media. Process here referring to change and progress somewhat doubtful as it seems to come with considerable setbacks regularly. Returning to democratic elections some thirty years ago and consolidating the peace process with the armed guerrilla groups some ten years later, generations of Guatemalan young are coming of age without having lived the brutal repression under authoritarian rule and the lack of civil rights fulfilled. As 2015 was a year characterized by both political and social turmoil due to massive corruption charges in the government and the biggest social mobilizations the country had seen for decades, Guatemala presents us with a unique setting for a study on alternative voices and discourse. A situation, I would say never heard of, when both the president and vice president are stripped of their immunity and imprisoned, whilst hundreds of thousands gather in protest against the political system during several months at the same time as the country as a whole is preparing for elections. Given the abnormality of the situation, seeing as institutions were rocked along with the political structures they rest upon, other settings could hardly present us with the conditions to study counter hegemonic voices and alternative media in times when the very hegemony is being put into questioning. Where other case studies may contribute with knowledge on processes regarding alternative media in “normal” settings, this study takes place at a very specific moment in time when the outcome of the social and political processes that triggered, and were triggered by, political crisis and massive response by the
citizenry is still unknown. The views and role of alternative media will then undoubtedly be of interest at a time and a place when the system they constantly question and turn against is put in to question with the whole world watching.

The pressure and co-optation the media was under during more dictatorial rule has been well documented and the relationship between traditional media, the state and the economically powerful is still not something that infuses credibility and leaves much to desire in a democratic society. Guatemalan researcher Silvio Gramajo describes this relationship in Guatemala as based on “simulation and perversion, rather than independence and autonomy” as “authorities selectively apply regulation and the media selectively exposes government mismanagement” (Gramajo in Guerrero and Marquez Ramirez, 2014:139-140).

In order to contribute to the knowledge on how alternative media challenging existing media power is being used -in the Latin American context- this study analyses the case of different progressive media centres in Guatemala. Focus is on their view of medias role and what narratives are brought to us by the alternative sector. This becomes interesting as it provides a stark contrast to the existing media power and the relationship between media and the state.

1.1.1 Aim of the study

The overall aim of this study is to bring more understanding to a growing use of Internet based alternative media in a context where its journalistic content may differ from mainstream media and where hegemonic discourses and values are being challenged.

Such dominant discourses are in the Guatemalan context most often associated with ideologies on the right side of the political spectra as they favour the existing hegemonic dominance, and thus tightly intertwined with conservative values and market liberalism. Chris Atton points out the abundance of studies that confirms mass media’s marginalization of some groups in society and favouring of powerful elites (Atton, 2002:6).

Therefore, and to specify the aim of this study even further, this study explores and analyses “new” progressive internet based media’s narratives and views of the media landscape. The study aims to do so by taking in the points of view of those complying the alternative media sector and thus give account for their lived experiences.

As this study, and the fieldwork at the basis for the empirical material gathered, takes place in a context of major political crisis in Guatemala and in one of social mobilization, the role of the media becomes highlighted and highly interesting.
1.1.2 Research questions

To bring us closer to the more general topic of interest and inquiry, which evolves around alternative media’s role in the Guatemalan society and why its existence and importance, this study parts from following research questions:

- How do different journalists and activists in the alternative sector perceive their role in the Guatemalan media landscape and are there differences between different types of media?
- What are their overall aims?
- What narratives and issues are being brought forward by alternative media?

1.1.3 Disposition

Continuing this introductory chapter, an outline of the theoretical approach for this study will be presented. Key words and concepts will be discussed and put into context. Also I will give account for the methodological approach used for this study, what concrete methods have been used to perform it and what materials have been collected and revised. I will also present some thoughts on ontological positioning and personal stance necessary for understanding my approach. Then continuing with a part on limitations for this study and a discussion on the choice of case. Chapter 2 offers some necessary background and context for further understanding of the setting for this thesis and field study. In chapter 3, which I have named “Swimming against the current” to highlight the analytic content connected to the purpose of this study, I present the analysis of the empirical material as well as a problematizing discussion around concepts and research questions. Chapter 4 is where finally I present my views and argue for how my research questions can be said to relate to the analysis and material. That is the last chapter where all concluding notes and discussions not priory seen is given space. After that follows transcriptions and coding scheme as appendixes and finally a list of references used and bibliography.

1.2 Theory and definitions

This chapter aims to introduce some of the different definitions and concepts used among scholars as to how to treat alternative or independent media. This will help us place this study in a relevant international context where alternative and independent media has been subject to academic investigation through different cases. Also, baring various definitions in mind, this allows us to take more nuances into account while analysing different actors and contents in the alternative media sector.
in the Guatemalan context as well as problematizing the different concepts. As theory on alternative media definitely isn’t abundant in its actual state, I will part from and describe some of the existing models created and used by leading scholars in the field.

Firstly, and to better understand the theoretical approach of this study, I will discuss some of the central concepts that will be referred to.

1.2.1 Hegemony and counter-hegemony

Seeing as these are central concepts both at the heart of this investigation and throughout this study, they need some special attention and defining. I will here introduce the of hegemonic power as seen by Antonio Gramsci and discuss what countering such power can indicate.

Gramsci’s notion of hegemony stems from what he saw as the institutionalized power by the bourgeois class over others in society. Its a notion of organized consent (not rising to erupt power structures) by the masses and firmly entrenched civil societies views of itself and man kind. Thus the leading bourgeois class need not necessarily to run the state since their power and ideas are hegemonic along side their political and economical dominance. Their power exists within the very structures of society and the dominant group through hegemonic power can exercise leadership before even winning governmental power (Carroll and Ratner, 1994:10). Gramsci’s definition of the state is more ample than just considering the power of government and takes in to account ”all the institutions which helped to create in people certain modes of behaviour and expectations consistent with the hegemonic social order” (Cox in GILL, 1993:49). Examples of such institutions and ”underpinnings of the political structure in civil society” would historically have been the church, the educational system and the press etc.

Using Gramsci’s notion of hegemonic power we can more easily understand the role of the media in exercising such power in society. It is a power wielded through discourse and information that works to maintain existing power structures favouring the bourgeois and governing class in a capitalist society. Countering such hegemony, in the media sense, would be to contest discourses by bringing forth others, based on different perspectives and premises and by reflecting the needs of the governed classes found in an inferior position.

Although with the focus on social movements, Carroll and Ratner pose an interesting problem and question if counter-hegemonic could be defined in a more proactive sense. The logic here being that the opposing of the existing order only exists as an opposite, or in relation to the existing order one opposes. According to them though, by countering hegemonic discourses, such as those of capital, patriarchy, colonialism among many, new ways of thinking about ourselves and the world around us
can be created (Carroll & Ratner. 1994:6).

1.2.2 Theorizing alternative media

To talk about, or try to define what really is, alternative media raises the obvious question; alternative to what? The very concept – alternative- can be seen as implying the existence of two options to what it really is we are talking about. Alternative media constitutes an alternative to mass-, mainstream or corporate media and seek to change the society they operate within. Seeing as studies of traditional media already comply a vast field and that content in such media gets exhibited each and every day as well as us getting exposed to it each and every day, this study will not in detail describe such media. Nor will it define its characteristics more than in the given relationship to its alternative and obviously as a contextual starting point.

1.2.3 Alternative, Radical or Citizen media?

In their book, Contesting Media Power: Alternative Media In A Networked world, Nick Couldry and James Curran see alternative media as: “Media production that challenges, at least implicitly, actual concentrations of media power, whatever form those concentrations may take in different locations“ (2003:7). In the Guatemalan context, as this study will show, concentrations of media power are tightly intertwined with political and state power. Therefore alternative media as it will be discussed in this study, challenge not only media power but also different levels of political power. In this study I will draw upon this last referred to definition as it is both specific in what alternative media needs to do, but at the same time this definition allows us to look at various types of alternative media still referring to the same concept. This challenge of power, or at least questioning of it, will be regarded as conforming alternatives rather than oppositions. As Raymond Williams describes the difference; “Alternative culture seeks a place to coexist within the existing hegemony whilst oppositional culture aims to replace it” (quoted in Atton, 2002:19).

Dorothy Kidd ads an interesting notion to the concept of alternative looking at the word’s own meaning. Kidd draws on Peruvian scholar Rafael Roncagliolo when she points out that the first part of the word alter, or change, is crucial (Kidd, 1999). Change here being changing existing perceptions, structures and power relations, changing “status quo” (Kidd, 2007). It can thus be seen as challenging consisting media power. To Kidd, “alternative media must operate with a different vision from the
"Corporatone", meaning not viewing its consumers on the basis of possible economic gain, rather viewing them as a public with rights to different types of narratives.

"Citizen Media"

The concept coined by Colombian scholar Clemencia Rodríguez, draws on Chantal Mouffe’s theories on radical citizenship as something we construct by concrete participation in political life and exercise rather than are given (Rodríguez, 2011:25).

Rodríguez defines citizen media "as those media that facilitate the transformation of individuals into "citizens", as understood in Mouffe’s redefinition of citizenship”. This meaning that media should be something any person or “citizen” can be able to exercise and that reaffirms the political and democratic rights “granted” by citizenship.

Although the term could be said to be accurate for defining most media and journalists in what I prefer to call the alternative sector, as they to, due to their devotion in their line of work, constitute as what Mouffe call a ”creature drawing political power from his or hers daily participation in democratic processes, not simply someone whom the state has granted the required status to engage in political actions” (Mouffe in Rodríguez, 2011:24). The term "citizen media” is perhaps handier on a more grass roots level where the journalistic production and product isn’t necessarily the goal. Similarities do of course exist seeing as Rodriguez goes on to describe the term as adequa

On a similar note, Michael Traber argues that when media production is placed in the hands of ordinary people the types of news and the style in which it is presented will be more relevant, more ‘useful’ and more appropriate to the communities (Atton, 2002:13). His own definition of alternative media is media that “aims to change towards a more equitable social, cultural and economic whole in which the individual is not reduced to an object (of the media or the political powers) but is able to find fulfilment as a total human being” (Traber in Atton, 2002:16).

In his definition, Traber makes an interesting distinction of different types of alternative media and that are useful for us to take into consideration. He argues for the necessary distinction between alternative advocacy media and grassroots media that can both of them represent alternative media but at different levels (Atton 2002:13).

Compared to mass media, he sees how alternative advocacy media introduces other social actors and their perspectives, such as oppressed or marginalised groups etc. He sees grassroots media on the other hand, as more of the embodiment of “alternative media values” because of how “they are produced by the same people whose concerns they represent, from a position of engagement and direct participation (Atton, 2002:16). In Traber's distinction he acknowledges how both types of alternative
media offer new narratives and challenge hegemony by introducing new actors and perspectives but at different levels and with very different possibilities to reflect the values that alternative media, in his views, should build on.

“Radical media”

The term used by John Downing, is to some extent different as he focuses, in his definition, on the process and organization of the media than say Kidd. Based on the four characteristics of radical media, as listed in Alternative Media by Chris Atton, that focus on contributions from multiple actors to achieve reflecting multiple realities and movements superiority to institutions among others, this becomes rather clear.

As Atton points out, Downing sees, what he calls, "radical media as the media of social movements" (Atton 2002) as he stresses the "movement" having an organization based on prefigurative politics. This meaning that radical media should reflect the society it must strive to achieve. This could though close the door to various media as they might focus on creating content that help shape society in preferred and more democratic way, but not necessarily following a radical notion to as to how such a society should be organized.

According to Atton, any model to describe or define alternative media must consider how communication as a social process is construed rather than just differences in content and medium. If the traditional mass media depicture different groups in certain ways and thus construct images reflecting the views and interests of hegemonic power, the response by alternative media can not only be through critique of those media “but by their own construction of news, based on alternative values and frameworks of news-gathering and access” (Atton, 2002:6).

The concepts presented and discussed in this section will continuously be used as points of reference throughout this paper. They will serve for analytical purposes and be used to discuss alternative media and what comes out of the empirical material gathered for this case study. In the sense that the empirical data for this study is not gathered or presented in a way as to test existing theories but rather generate new specifics to the construction of the social world, this study has been conducted in an inductive manner. Therefore the theoretical debate presented and discussed will merely help us understand alternative media in a theoretical context rather than testing and ruling out truths and falsehoods. Not using a deductive approach, although possible one could argue, is a fully conscious choice due to the nature of the study intended to make. In order for us to analyse the perceptions of alternative media journalists and activists, I believe that the concepts necessary for the explanation of
the social world that is created in these meetings are best understood when extracted and not priory imposed. I go in to more detail in to this and develop this constructivist approach in the following chapter.

1.2.4 Independence

There are those who would prefer to talk about Independent media instead of alternative media. The arguments, which I won’t go in to here, may vary but one doesn’t imply the absence of the other. Quite contrary, independence is regularly contemplated by scholars focusing attention on alternative media production and is a necessity for the very defining characteristics of a certain media being alternative. Drawing on the example of the Liverpool Free Press, two out of three elements constituting the alternative aspects of the media regard independence; commercial independence that brings with it journalistic freedom and editorial independence from organizations or political parties etc. (Atton, 2002:17). The idea that independence may stem from the absence of commercial interests seem generalized among many scholars an can be linked to the idea that alternative media should produce information useful to ordinary people and not affected by commercial considerations. The independence will then be affected by the very structure of the media, if commercial interests may shape the content of the publication or not.

With a focus on the means of production, independence stems from, as Tim O’Sullivan sees it, a democratic/collectivist process of production and a commitment to innovation or experimentation in form and content (Atton, 2002:15). Thus the structure comes into consideration again and independence is discussed in contradiction to hierarchical media based on the premises of the private enterprise in the liberal sense.

1.3 Method and material

In this chapter I will introduce the strategy used for conducting my research as well as introducing the materials and methods used for the study. This chapter also aims to problematize both choice of methods and empirical material due to the complexity of the phenomenon here studied and for the sake of highlighting a constructivist approach and the researchers central role in defining the course of investigation.
1.3.1 Qualitative research

At the heart of this investigation on alternative medias contributing role in Guatemalan society, is the studied case of 5 independent media centres. The case aims to give an insight to alternative medias role and importance in Guatemalan society. By using a multiple-case design I hope to cover more terrain and soak up contrasts in views and methods by alternative media. Yin argues that a multiple-case research design stand to gain more analytic benefits than a single-case design as it offers possibilities of theoretical replication (Yin, 2012:63). In the light of this study though, the necessity for such possibilities is debateable as will be discuss regarding validity and reliability.

For the sake of depth, this study has been conducted using qualitative research methods. In very few words, this sort of research strategy and method rely mostly on words and content of those words rather than information that is quantifiable (Bryman, 2011:340). Focus for this study has been on the perceived role and meaning of alternative media. Using qualitative research methods, performing interviews for example, allows us to extract deeper knowledge about the informant’s own views and perceptions (Bryman, 2011:413). This makes qualitative research methods rely on interpretation, which then make the researcher central for understanding the results of his or her research. Trying to find a way to define such methods, Guest, MacQueen and Namey draw on the Online Dictionary of the Social Sciences, which sees qualitative research as “Research using methods such as participant observation or case studies which result in a narrative, descriptive account of a setting or practice” (2012:5). Such a description seem fitting for defining this study as a result of qualitative methods as it too seeks to interpret, in this case, perceptions on alternative media.

Therefore qualitative methods, allowing us to more freely interpret deeper perceptions of those involved, are more adequate to better understand the social environment in which they operate. The social environment that forms, and is being formed by, these social actors and individuals is in the light of this study not seen as something static or objectively predefined but rather as a construction in the making and ever evolving.

1.3.2 Constructivist approach and objectivity

The positivist notion that science has to be objective, without values, I find rather difficult to understand and accept. That there should exist some sort of static world around us that we as persons, as collectives and as individuals, are in some ways distanced from and cant shape with our ideas, is in
stark contrast with what I see as an ever constructing reality relative to whom tries to understand or define it.

In order for us to think critically about the world around us, I believe we stand much more to gain from seeing how, we as, social actors are the ones continuously shaping social events and that the world as we know it doesn’t exist independently from us. In *Social Research Methods*, by Alan Bryman, such a view or understanding of the world is what constitutes social constructionism and that social categories for instance, aren’t only constructed through social interaction but also in a state of constant revision (2011:37).

True to this ontological position, I see knowledge as something we construct and that it is therefore indeterminate and susceptible to personal interpretation as one participates actively in the construction of the social world.

This whole study is based on interviews with people that work with telling stories about a reality they see, but think is not being portrayed anywhere else, and thus adding to existing versions of what the world is and contains. They help create awareness on issues and perceptions and understandings about the events they portray.

As journalists or activists they offer different accounts of the social world around us that create other notions of reality. In a similar way, researchers studying such phenomenon add to existing understandings of the world by lifting out narratives and presenting their own findings.

For instance, as a researcher I will help create or influence the conditions and settings for my research, by defining questions, areas of interest and population etc, and thus influence in the creation of a specific context. Other than that, the possible conclusions drawn at the basis of the research will also be the result of studying a social reality, by me deemed interesting, that is in constant revision as social actors come and go.

On that note, I see a clear relationship to what is often discussed as objectivity, a word with special presence in the world of the media as here studied.

Just as little as there can be said to exist a journalistic objectivity I believe it to be possible for research to be truly objective. Sure things can be measured and generalized in certain areas, but the conclusions I will draw will all have been prompted by a series of decisions and priorities which I as a researcher consciously or unconsciously have made during the course of the investigation.

Motivated as these choices may be, they could just as well have been motivated other wise or differently had the interest differed or the scientific hypotheses at the basis of this study been other. This privilege, if one wishes to see it as that, obviously comes with a responsibility. A responsibility I hope I have taken in a transparent way so that in the future, hopefully someone can use hers or his special privilege to challenge my conclusions and ideas based on their own perspectives and priorities.
1.3.4 Method

The empirical data collected for this study has been extracted by performing semi-structured interviews with journalists and activists working in the alternative media sector as well as two outside experts for the sake of a different perspective on both alternative media and the Guatemalan media context. A distinction is made between journalists representing alternative advocacy media and activists representing a more grassroots based media, thus a comparative perspective will be used as a method when analysing the material. This in turn will help us better understand the material and structure our analysis so that nuances and differences may be better categorized and understood. This sort of comparison, and sorting the six different media into two groups, will help us to better overlook the material and understand the arguments and point of views of the informants according to the media he or she represents.

1.3.5 Semi-structured interviews

As this study seek to give account for the nuances, or subtleties in the informants perceived roles and positions, the semi-structured interview allows them to develop their answers and views relatively freely at the same time as the interview guide and general questions allow for me as a researcher to analyse the data in a somewhat more structured way by using a comparative perspective. Even though the interest here are the perceptions of journalists and activists working in alternative media, our line of focus is clearly defined and in need of some consistency in the topics and answers for the sake of not losing track of the research questions at the basis of this whole study. Using unstructured, or non-directive, interviewing technique would complicate the extraction of valuable data in this sense due to the risk of not getting the answers to the desired information and as my goal as a researcher is clear, this would complicate thing more than it helps. Aware of the researchers possible influence in the answers, making to direct questions, I see no problem as I don’t give to much for research’s “objectivity” and believe most results can be said to be biased depending on who you ask.

The answers may or may not differ among the informants, but as this study gives account for the case of various units, structure becomes important as a means to systematize and understand the content of the data. Although crucially, as Bryman points out, the method allows the informants liberty to formulate their answers as they see fit (2011:415). As this study contains comparative elements as a methodological approach, the semi-structured interview becomes a more adequate method as we need to be able to draw clear comparisons and between the differing views among informants. The idea to offer a secure and free space for the informants to develop their ideas and thoughts have gone hand in
hand with the idea to, some extent, guide the direction of the interviews by asking the same or similar questions or by introducing the same topics of conversation.

1.3.6 Qualitative content analysis

As for the empirical data collected through the interviews, it has been analysed using qualitative content analysis. This being one of the most common methods in a qualitative approach analysing written text and documents it implies the search for underlying themes in the empirical material (Bryman 2011:505). The text is in this case the transcript material from 8 semi-structured interviews. The purpose of using this technique is obviously to make sense of and interpret the material by identifying themes that can link to the research questions guiding this study.

In an article by Hsieh & Shannon qualitative content analysis is defined as:

“…a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1278).

I find this definition useful and interesting as they stress the subjectivity of the one who applies the method to a given text.

They differentiate between what they see as three different kinds of qualitative content analysis: conventional, directed and summative. Each with their own strengths and weaknesses, the one most apt for this sort of study would be the conventional content analysis as preconceived categories are avoided and instead extracted from the data and the social reality that we construct, thus avoiding imposing them. Although all three of them are used to analyse the content of data, directed and summative approach limits us in ways not coherent with the aims of this study. Directed for being too rigid in starting of with a theory that guides the extraction of codes and summative of its strong focus on the counting and comparison of words.

Also, as they point out and which can be said to be highly true for this field of study, “This type of design is usually appropriate when existing theory or research literature on a phenomenon is limited” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005:1279). This though calls for some revision as research and literature on alternative media is no longer that scarce and doing an oversight we are presented with an ample selection of case studies in different social settings. However, seeing as this study takes place in a very specific setting and at a specific given time as described in the introduction, necessary theory can still be said to be limited along with studies on the Guatemalan context.

Conventional qualitative content analysis is well suited for analysing empirical material that stems from semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions.
However, Hsieh & Shannon see a risk in the researcher not developing a full understanding of the context and failing to identify key themes or categories in reading the data. There is a risk of being maybe too dependent on the researchers subjective interpretation, leading one to biased or incorrect, or even unfounded, conclusions. Or simply not grasping the whole picture and thus loosing out on interesting information for further analysis. This brings us to reflect on validity and reliability in this kind of study, as I will do after giving account for the materials used to build my research.

1.3.7 Materials

The first hand material for this study is constituted by empirical data derived from 8 semi-structured interviews with journalists, activists and media experts in Guatemala. I conducted the interviews myself using an audio recorder and then transcribing the interviews. My observations from the field and second hand data have been used to add to my findings and contrast the data derived from the interviews.

1.3.8 Interviews

The interviews vary some in depth and extent due to limitations in the interviewed persons personal schedule and availability. The goal to perform interviews of at least one hour was always the same but not always met due to these reasons and circumstances during the fieldwork for this study. The same petition for time was in other words always made but not always met.

Interviews with one representative of each of the five alternative media chosen to constitute the selection of this case have been made, thus speaking for themselves and for the media they represent. In all but one case was it possible to conduct the interviews in person and in a location chosen by the informants or in an agreed place where they would feel comfortable. In the case of Centro de Medios Independientes, one of the six media platforms consulted for this study, an interview in person was never made possible due to availability, or rather difficulties of finding the time as the ones involved all participate in their spare time. Instead my questions were answered in writing by one of their representatives and emailed back to me. A more thorough presentation of the six will follow in the next pages.

The interview guide and interview questions have been elaborated to fit the overall aim of this study and to help us collect the necessary data to answer the research questions posed. Hopefully, this will have helped to shine some light on the inquiry that will be developed later on. The given answers and
the data collected, and how they relate to the aim of my research, will be reflected more thoroughly later on.

The general topics for the interviews, reflected in sometimes more and sometimes less direct questions, were the following:

- Perception on alternative media versus traditional media
- Different narratives
- Role in society
- Objectives of the media
- Importance and desired impact
- Reflected voices and ideas
- The imagined or desired public to reach out to

The interviews were all conducted in Spanish as this is the mother tongue of all the informants. The language barrier, I believe, has been minimal as I have lived in Spanish speaking countries several years, Guatemala being one of them, and therefore feel confident in my ability to understand and speak the language. However, I will always find it necessary to stress the cultural differences and customs shaping our understanding of reality as a possible obstacle to my full comprehension. The subtleties of modes of expression are in themselves a science to be studied as they are constructed and redefined as life goes on.

The transcriptions of the interviews remain written in Spanish and as I refer to them in the text the translations used will be my own.

1.3.9 Second hand sources

As a means to contrast the views of my informants and the data derived from the interviews on certain topics reflected in the research questions, I have largely tried to use second hand sources as close to the context studied as possible. One such example is the DOSES Association, which is a Guatemalan civil society entity that works monitoring the media and specializes in media investigation.

The reports from DOSES gives us insight do the different medias role in covering a specific event which was the elections of 2015. The material is the result of an extensive work by DOSES and different organizations conforming the elections observatory. By recurring to this kind of material we can better understand the fluctuations in the consumption of both traditional mass media and to some extent alternative media, thus granting us the possibility to add to our conclusions.

In the sections on the media context and the brief historic contextualisation, local researchers and material have been consulted.
In some cases, the informants have been able to hand me statistical information on the demography of “users” of, or public that visits, their websites. As this data is limited we cannot expect to draw any valid conclusions but it will serve for the sake of discussion.

1.3.10 Field Work

This whole study has been made on the basis of ten weeks of fieldwork carried out in Guatemala between November 2015 and January 2016. Thanks to the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, SIDA, and the Institute of Latin American studies at Stockholm University, I was granted a scholarship that made the realization of this project and investigation possible.

During the almost three months of fieldwork, I spent numerous days and hours immersed in daily news and political debate, going to press conferences, presentations when not enjoying the enormous privilege of getting to interview and talk to inspiring journalists and media activists. I before knew Guatemala from having lived there and worked for a human rights organization based in the capital. That was my point of entry to Guatemalan political and social life as well as to the general curiosity that triggered the process of this investigation and writing this thesis.

Thanks to the many contacts acquired from my work with human rights activists and social movements I was able to get in touch with the people that made this study possible by agreeing to being interviewed as well as by helping me with input and information. Through prior contacts, and with the help from the Institute of Latin American Studies, I was able to get in touch with all my informants quite quickly once arrived in Guatemala and get on with my work. I then presented me as a student of Stockholm University but always making reference to the organization I hade worked with before and the time I spent in Guatemala. This, I am sure, helped me get access to people and more importantly helped create the necessary confidence and trust between me and my informants for agreeing to bet interviewed and speak freely. Some informants I had met before and some work for the very organizations I had worked with. But most were only known to me for their work and through the media they represent.

The opportunity to go to Guatemala and being able to spend enough time for all the impressions to sink in and to talk to so many inspiring people is one I will cherish forever. I am both grateful for the financial support by SIDA, the confidence in me from the Institute of Latin American Studies at Stockholm University, but maybe mostly for the time and devotion proportioned by all the informants that made this study possible. Thank you!
1.4 Validity and reliability

Whether or not to apply these concepts stemming from more quantitative research is something of conflicting views among researchers. There are those who try to apply them all the same and those who argue that they, because of their origin in measuring quantitative data are unsuitable and unusable in qualitative research (Bryman, 2011:52).

Some obvious difficulties, as I see them, arise when trying to replicate, for example, a study as a way to test its external reliability. Bearing in mind both the role of the researcher, and its personal influence on the research, as well as the ever changing social environment it is impossible to, as put by LeCompte and Goetz […] “freeze” a social setting” (Bryman, 2012:390).

Thus we cannot expect to be able to perform this study at a different time with different people involved as social reality will be constructed differently according to the specific surroundings and circumstances present at that moment. From a constructionist point of view it becomes clear that social reality, as we know it, is constructed and defined continuously and therefore definitive definitions become obsolete. However, we could expect to produce some general knowledge valuable for further analysis and research even though the conditions will be others and the social world constructed on different premises.

Instead, other terms are proposed to more accurately assess qualitative research that reflects its findings in a relevant way.

In the light of this specific case study, which focuses on the lived experiences by journalists and activists in the alternative media sector, some of the concepts used to “measure” the validity and reliability of qualitative research could interesting if applied in with an open mind and true to a constructionist approach.

Out of the more classical terms, such as external and internal reliability and internal and external validity, the one that becomes interesting and applicable to this study is the internal validity as described by LeCompte and Goetz. This as it refers to “whether there is a good match between researchers’ observations and the theoretical ideas they develop” (Bryman, 2012:390).

Instead turning to some more adequate criteria such as the notions of trustworthiness and authenticity by Guba and Lincoln (Bryman, 2012:390), I will indicate how I find this study to live up to them.

By choosing to use a multiple-case design I evidently will give account for multiple interpretations of reality thus adding to the study’s credibility. Triangulation is a technique that when used adds to the credibility. I have presented conflicting views to strengthen my analysis as well as referring to second hand empirical material on topics touched upon in the interview material.
Regarding transferability, this study is based on weeks of fieldwork in a very specific context that I hope will be reflected throughout the text that follow. Contributing with observations I would rather focus on producing a “thick description” than empirical material and analysis that is transferable to another context or another moment as this conflicts with the ever-constructing realities as I see it. For the same reasons I don’t believe dependability or confirmability as described by Bryman to be applicable terminology at any stage of this specific investigation.

1.5 Choice of case

1.5.1 Sampling

The independent progressive media centres that have been interviewed for this study have been chosen using purposive sampling. This strategic technique is used to try to create concordance between selection and research questions and I as a researcher select people to interview that are relevant for the aims questions I pose (Bryman 2011:434). Using this sampling technique comes at a price if one wishes to see it that way. For instance, it effects external validity as it prevents us from generalize the results of the study to a population. As discussed in the prior section, that hasn’t been the purpose of this investigation. Other terms has instead been used to determine the “validity” of this study. Both prior research, the medias own description of themselves, as well as external experts opinions have been taken into account in deciding on who to include and who not to on a theoretical basis. Importantly, they all fit within what I choose to label as alternative media and the definition borrowed from other scholars. Important to mention is also how they all form part of a growing community of alternative media that uses the Internet as a platform for reaching out and exchanging ideas.

1.5.2 Selection

This section gives a short description of each one of them to give account on why they have been chosen for the study. In following sections a contextualization of the larger Guatemalan media landscape will be given to complement. Also, I will briefly discuss “the one’s left out”.

Categorizing all six as alternative media and finding the interesting for this study as they advocate change, they share differences and similarities. A distinction is here made between, on the one hand,
those counter hegemonic voices representing activists and movements, and on the other, alternative media seeking change working from journalistic professional principles.

Although the theory developed in this specific field of alternative media studies is still rather limited, some scholars make this distinction and identify different purposes and values.

The distinction I make can be seen in the light of, and compared to, Michael Traber’s who choses to call the two sectors alternative advocacy media and grassroots media (Atton 2002:13). Leaning on Traber’s notions as described in the introductory chapter theorizing alternative media, this distinction will here forth be referred to in his words for the sake of simplicity and theoretical contextualization.

Together the alternative media sites chosen for this study make out the scope of different media and voices that can be found trying to counter hegemonic discourses and challenge existing power relations in Guatemala today. They are representative of on the one hand, a progressive and professional part of the journalistic corps seeking transparency and social change, and on the other, of the social movements and political ideas challenging today’s hegemony between political and economic media power. By including the views and opinions of six different media centres we have the possibility of getting a much fuller description of the media climate and current situation for alternative media as they come from different perspectives and publications.

These differences make for interesting comparison as each of the media here studied all contribute uniquely with form, perspective and in content. What may differ most is the form and format of the material published, levels of rigorous transparency and accuracy of sources, contrasting opinions. As we will see in the descriptions that follow they set out to represent different voices, vary in aims and means but share some common ground necessary for the type of comparison I set out to make. Their differences become important to lift out as the research questions guiding this study aim to produce some general understandings of progressive alternative media in Guatemala. By seeing to various such media and different voices we can better scope up existing nuances that allows for a more thorough analysis of the studied phenomenon.

I have chosen to only focus on alternative media that uses the Internet as a platform and a way of reaching out through the mediascape. This brings both benefits and disadvantages if we are to understand the complete scope of alternative voices and grassroots production given the existing technological breach in Guatemala. What this study leaves out for example are the vast amount of communitarian radio stations operating in practically the whole country with often a much bigger reach than the internet as very few people still have access to a computer, let alone an internet connection. Such radio stations and networks of social communicators and activists are of course of great importance in a country with a still rural, majorly poor and to a large extent illiterate, population with little access to information. Projects of communitarian TV in both rural and urban areas is another very interesting phenomenon that’s been developed over the last few years and that is
involving communities and movements. For the sake of limitation, such and many other media projects have been left out of this study in spite of the very interesting and important contribution they would have made to this discussion on the role of alternative media in Guatemala. This of course highlights the need for further studies, as we are already on forehand aware of the limitations regarding the selection that could be seen as rather discriminating. That is of course not my intention and I do not believe web-based media nor its public to be more important.

As shown by the examples made out by the persons interviewed for this study, personal background can vary and not necessarily determine ones views and experiences. What seems more determining is the type of media represented by each and every one of the informants.

**Plaza Pública** was first founded in 2011 by the Jesuit Catholic University of Rafael Landívar and, although editorially independent, the majority of its financing comes from the university, the rest from international development agencies and cooperation. It is described as a “[…]digital periodic newspaper focused on analysis, investigation and debate, that claims the human rights, democracy and a sustainable integral development” (Plaza Pública, 2014).

**Centro de Medios Independientes** (CMI) is a collective of persons that wishes to “break with the siege of the big corporate media with relevant information that helps understand the Guatemalan reality more accurate”. Most of their published content is analysis of the political context and key persons in Guatemalan political life as well as investigative journalism. Of their more general objectives, among other important ones, can be mentioned […] “to provide information and analysis to contribute to public opinion with a more critical and extensive vision”. They seek to “decentralize and democratize the access to the informative and communicational media” (CMI, 2014).

**La Cuerda** is the most experienced media of the six. Being both the articulation of a political movement and a forum for feminist interpretation of reality, La Cuerda started coming out in print in 1998, two years after the peace accords were signed in Guatemala. It is in its own words an alternative communicational media, critical and that encourages democracy, liberty and peace. Its published material comes mostly in the form of analytical articles and investigative journalism (La Cuerda, 2014).

**Nómada** is a new journalistic media site founded in 2014. Although similar to Plaza Pública, and having been founded by the same person, there is difference in content and mission. Nómada describes itself as a feminist media doing vanguard journalism in search of the truth, with transparency and ensuring justice (Nómada, 2015a).
*Prensa Comunitaria* is a media with much closer contact with grassroots movements and it identifies with the struggle of the indigenous and campesino groups. They describe their journalism as [...]“communitarian, feminist and autonomous” and as documenting the peoples voice and their different struggles (Prensa Comunitaria, 2013).

*El Salmón* is an online magazine formatted as a blog and mainly based on opinion on politics, social matters and economics. Its main purpose is to be counter-hegemonic and to offer an alternative to public opinion. As their name suggest, the salmon swims against the current (El Salmón, 2014).

As discussed before on a theoretical level, these media do not function by the logic of the private enterprise in the liberal sense where they have to produce revenue to subsist. This is what many may argue what ensures them their independence. That notion will be discussed more thoroughly later on in the light of what voices are being heard through the alternative media.

### 1.5.3 Journalists and activists

The following tables are over the journalists and activists that I have interviewed and chosen to represent the alternative media here studied. All have been interviewed using the same semi-structured technique. The extent of the interviews varies according to the time each one was able to give me during my field studies.

Alternative advocacy media:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Plaza Pública</td>
<td>- General coordinator for Plaza Pública</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in journalism. Master in strategic studies</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Nómada</td>
<td>- Director of Nómada and university teacher</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in international relations and master in Latin</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Grassroots media:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Media</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>El Salmón</td>
<td>- Journalist and director of <em>SEDEM</em> (NGO working for human rights and security)</td>
<td>University studies</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Prensa Comunitaria</td>
<td>- Social communicator and news reporter</td>
<td>University degree in communication</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Centro de Medios Independientes</td>
<td>- Digital security consultant</td>
<td>Computer science</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>La Cuerda</td>
<td>- Editor of <em>La Cuerda</em> - Director of <em>Ediciones del Pensativo</em> editorial - Independent social researcher</td>
<td>Anthropologist and history teacher</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.5.4 Experts

The two informants used for this section were consulted on the advice of a senior researcher at the institute of Latin American Studies with an academic background in Guatemala. I performed two semi-structured interviews with experts on the field for the sake of outside opinion and, naturally, knowledge based expertise. Both informants were chosen on the basis of their prior research, relevant line of work and current occupation. In both of their cases, these merits gives them
insight and knowledge very useful for my study. Informant H is as shown in the following chart the director of the DOSES association that monitors Guatemalan media and produces research based material useful for the understanding of the media context. Informant G teaches journalism at the Rafael Landívar University and has researched and written about the relationship between the media and political power in Guatemala. Their acquired knowledge and expertise on the field makes them both interesting as informants for this study as a means to count in external voices and opinions on alternative media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Informant</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>- University teacher and independent consultant</td>
<td>PhD in social research</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>- Director of DOSES (Media monitoring and research) - Columnist and reporter</td>
<td>Bachelor’s degree in literature Master’s degree in global and comparative sociology</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.6 Limitations

Only alternative media using the internet as a platform have been consulted for this study even though other form of alternative communication exist and are in themselves also interesting and worthy of closer studies. Communitarian radio stations and community television production for example, can be said to share many aspects with some of the media presented here and do indeed in some cases even work together. However, this study limits itself to the internet as a platform due to reasons explained in the introduction. Thereby not said that alternative media do not exist outside of the Internet or that having Internet based platforms at disposal makes media alternative. On the contrary, many, if not most, internet based media sites reproduce the same hegemonic views as printed press or mass media and much of the alternative media production and communication in Guatemala is taking place outside the boundaries of the internet.

Some specific examples should maybe then be mentioned as they are neither alternative nor traditional in the sense. Not alternative because they do not fit the theoretical descriptions discussed in the
introductory chapter, nor are they independent from commercial interests, and not traditional because they present new modes of production and are in some cases dynamic in a way traditional media cannot. The ones with the greatest coverage are República.gt, Soy502 and Diario Digital (DOSES, 2013).

One possible way of doing this study would have been to focus more on the differences between alternative and traditional media and by doing so, interviewing representatives of “both sides”. That would change the premises of comparison and as I see shift focus from what was really intended with this thesis. Bearing in mind the obvious limitations in the marc of a bachelor’s thesis, I found that giving more space and attention to those already getting the most would be severely limiting to my purpose. Of course the possible contradictory views on hegemonic media power and alternatives would be, and are, highly interesting for the sake of study. But I do not believe it to be the best way of soaking up the nuances and lived experienced by those having chosen to contrast the power from outside, finding new ways to interpret and describe the world.

1.7 Prior research and own contributions

Having already given account for some of the main voices among scholars dealing with alternative media, I will keep this part somewhat shorter as many references have already been made and much prior research then obviously been presented. There are however some interesting cases that have been studied in the Latin American context that we can refer to as this study is set in a clear regional context but at a very local level.

In her dissertation Bridging the blocked river, Virginia Melián deals with the interplay between social movements and digital media by focusing on the case of a bilateral environmental movement in Uruguay and Argentina and its use of digital technologies and the internet in organization. Adding to a somewhat limited field of studies, that interplay interesting for my study as connections can be made to use of digital media by social movements. Important to note is that I refer to alternative media as a specific field of interest that has yet to see an overwhelming amount of investigation and theory building whereas media and journalism are well studied and debated fields among scholars in the social sciences. Seeing as this study focuses on very specific aspects of alternative media, other more developed fields will not be referred to as their abundance may speak for itself.

In Citizens’ media against armed conflict: Disrupting violence in Colombia, Clemencia Rodríguez presents a case of civilian collective media production in rural communities affected by the violence and fighting between armed groups. It gives interesting account for the use of for example community radio and media production that fits the interest and needs of local population and contributes vastly
with views on what can happen when citizens are empowered with themselves defining media content. Also, Rodriguez contributes with theoretical arguments about what she has come to call *Citizen media*.

With this study I hope to contribute to a hopefully increasing amount of case studies on the particulars of alternative media working to counter hegemonic media power in different in local contexts. Given the very specific setting and moment in history that I am sure we will remember Guatemala for, this study contributes with a thorough display of alternative media’s views on the contemporary media situation and our contemporary time. By focusing on their lived experiences and views and opinions, this study contributes with knowledge on the organization and intentions of alternative media in a specific context. The analysis hopes to provide with input on the role of alternative media in the Guatemalan society and socio-political context.

With that said, this is a document built on data gathered during a particular moment in time, part of a constructed reality that has been subjectively interpreted and disclosed by me, a person, participant in such construction, student, individual and collective human being.

### 2. Background and media context

As the understanding for the unique context in which this study has been conducted is necessary for the further understanding of this specific case study, I will begin this chapter with a brief historical background on alternative media in Guatemala. Also, to better understand the existing media context in which the media consulted for this case study operate, I will introduce some local views and research on the current media climate in the country. I will in this section start introducing the views of the informants interviewed for this study and will be citing them and referring to the interview transcripts found as appendices.

#### 2.1 Counterhegemonic: A history

The aim of this section is to provide the necessary historical context and to introduce some of the predecessors to modern day alternative media. Not being able to here include a to thorough historical overview on political history due to necessary limitations, and not to sway of the focus of this study, I will give account for some key movements that help us better understand the societal and political context alternative media in Guatemala operate within today.
The legacy of No Nos Tientes; from satire to feminism

Today’s alternative media focused on questioning the status quo and investigating those themes earlier not investigated can be seen in relation to some historical experiences in the Guatemalan case. During the many long years of authoritarian rule and with that, censorship and repression, one voice was particularly critical and lonely in publicly investigating and questioning the government: the student periodical No Nos Tientes. Circulating once a year around Easter, and as a crucial part of the public San Carlos University student protest tradition of La Huelga de Dolores, No Nos Tientes sought to challenge the sitting governments, using investigation, profound analysis and political satire as a means of social and political critique. Its first ever publication came out in 1898, no less than 118 years ago, articulating the students critique and their protests against their contemporary rulers (Arriola, 2009:199).

During the 1970’s and 80’s, the most brutal period of the 36 years of internal armed conflict in terms of violence and political repression, the periodical was, according to Iduvina Hernández who worked with the newspaper in those days, the only non co-opted journalistic expression among the written press in Guatemala (Informant C).

Due to the government persecution and brutal reprimands, everything about it had to somewhat be clandestine. The production, the printing, names, and even the street vendors had their way of selling the periodical within other papers without drawing the attention of the police or the military (Informant C). Narrating this period of Guatemalan history makes it impossible not to mention the extent of the brutal repression and the many deaths, according to Hernández as many as 80-90 % of the university professionals involved with No Nos Tientes at that time died as a cause of the violence perpetrated by the state. This of course also gives us insight to the overall situation for opinion making and allows us to draw some conclusions about the media climate.

The panorama has since then changed and such critique doesn’t necessarily always imply death threats and persecution, although bearing in mind that Guatemala can be a dangerous country for journalists and that freedom of expression is not to be taken for granted.

There are parallels to be drawn between the role of No Nos Tientes, as it used to be, and some of the existing media of today. The very basis of providing information and narratives different from the rest and that questions the very foundations of power and the status quo, is what is being discussed with reference to alternative media. Hernández compares No Nos Tientes to the contemporary Plaza Pública and Nómada for their profound investigation journalism and to El Salmón for its opinions and creativity as a horizontally organized media.
The clandestine ways of the street vendors have been replaced by an accessible platform and open to anyone with access to a computer, the Internet and with more and more actors not only the government is focus of critique and scrutiny. Obviously things will have changed but the flag of advocating social and political change as well as challenging hegemonic discourse in traditional media is still being lifted.

Democracy and peace accords

In more recent times, and after a change in the socio-political context due to the signing of the peace accords in 1996, the feminist periodical magazine *La Cuerda* started coming out once a month in 1998. In its own words being an alternative communicational media, critical and that encourages democracy, liberty and peace (*La Cuerda*, 2014). *La Cuerda* is, and was, both a movement and a media platform for feminist analysis of society that advocates political action and is itself an active participant in shaping feminist and political ideas. These are most often contrary to those commonly represented in traditional mass media. In its conception, *La Cuerda*, questions the very structure that defines most traditional media, that of the private enterprise in the hands of the very few and powerful. The magazine is in many ways a point of reference for alternative discourse and narratives, offering a space for opinions and ideas prior left out of public debate. The peace accords allowed for new ground to be broken in the communication of different topics and made a qualitative leap possible in any artistic production (Informant F).

With time no longer having to suffer open persecution and repression from the government and armed forces, *La Cuerda* has been a key voice contributing to introducing new words, thoughts and perspectives in public life and debate.

2.2 Media context

This section aims to provide contextual information about the general situation for media in Guatemala today and different relations of power and influence. By presenting the panorama of mass media that are dominant in so many ways, I hope to better describe the context and reality for the alternative narratives and forms of organization. This section also aims to problematize media independence by looking at modes of financing.

Media for the masses
The Association for Development, organization, Service and Sociocultural studies (DOSES for its Spanish syllables), lists 24 different media actors in its published media directory from 2013 (DOSES, 2013). The criteria for such selection isn’t very clear but the organization, devoted to investigation and monitoring of media in Guatemala, gives us a pretty good idea about the panorama of existing mass media only two years ago. The fact that some of the alternative media listed and analysed in this study tells us mainly that it is an ever evolving and changing field of studies and that information is never static.

Among those 24 we find printed newspapers, magazines, radio and TV-stations and finally online media that makes for a rather short list as it is in need of actualization.

What most of them have in common, although founded at different times and producing different types of media content, is that they are structured on the basis of being private enterprises, thus depending on advertisement and sales, or as in some cases, on the good graces of their private owners. Though nothing is ever black or white, living of advertisement sales can prove to be a slippery slope as it risks creating an economic dependence to different interest groups and may thus put the papers independence to test. According to Gramajo, this sort of dependence has in Guatemala been [...] “used to make the press and journalism if not supportive of governments and corporations, at least silenced accomplices” (Gramajo in Guerrero & Marquez Ramirez, 2014:152). This sort of blackmailing the media into adapting to the advertisers own agenda is according to him what forced the magazine Crónica to shut down in the year 2001. More examples of that sort of pressure have been given to me talking to any journalist that has prior been active in traditional media sector in Guatemala.

The independence of media might not only be threatened by advertisers erratic meddling in affairs, but also by the very logic of the private enterprise; having to turn a profit no matter what. What is also characteristic of Guatemalan mass media is the high concentration of ownership by a powerful few. The two biggest daily newspapers, Prensa Libre and Nuestro Diario, together with El Quetzalteco, Guatemalas second biggest city Quetzaltenango’s local newspaper, make up for almost 80 per cent of the daily circulation (Gramajo in Guerrero & Marquez Ramirez, 2014:142). Different members of the Marroquín family, that has a long trajectory in Guatemalan media, control El Periódico, Crónica and La Hora. as well as the quite recently launched web-based Republicagt.com (DOSES, 2013, Nómada, 2015b). The family of Erik Archila, former minister of mining and energy during the Pérez Molina regime and who resigned in may of 2015 amidst corruption charges, owns and controls among others radio channel Emisoras Unidas, TV-station Canal Antigua, the Contra Poder magazine and the daily newspaper Publinews (DOSES, 2013). All this to give some highlighting examples to ownership concentration that colludes with political interests in what Gramajo calls “monopoly structures” (Guerrero & Marquez Ramirez, 2014:144).
Trying to understand the relationship between the media and political rule, as there would seem to be a lack of independence, a perspective on recent history might help us. Gramajo does take up an interesting dimension pointing out that in Guatemala the transition from authoritarian regime to holding public elections took place 12 years before the end of the armed conflict but also that the transition did not imply the dismantlement of authoritarianism per se in exercising power. That would include not altering media property structure at the same time as media’s role during the military haven’t been thoroughly examined or put into question (Guerrero & Marquez Ramirez, 2014:140-141).

The answer to the question who, then, stands to gain from such a structure, seems rather obvious in the light of what is described. Lenin said, “In politics it is not so important who directly advocates particular views. What is important is who stands to gain from these views, proposals, measures”.

Or as someone so eloquently simplified it; “you look for the person who will benefit”. Those wise words seem applicable to media as well when tracing its lack of independence, especially given the close ties to political life and influence as in the case displayed by Guatemala.

Gramajo sees the close bonds between political and economical power and the media as inhibiting any chance of real independence and professional journalism and benefitting only those who seek to maintain hegemonic discourse and power. Interestingly, for this study as well, he mentions the digital media as a possible contributor to pluralism and alternatives to mainstream media opinion (Guerrero & Marquez Ramirez, 2014:144).

3. Swimming against the current

In the following chapter I will present the analytical part of this field study where I will give account for the relationship between my research questions and the empirical material. As presented in the introduction, the research questions posed are; How do different journalists and activists in the alternative sector perceive their role in the Guatemalan media landscape and are there differences between different types of media? What are their overall aims? What narratives and issues are being brought forward by alternative media?

The analysis presented here is mainly based on semi-structured interviews but also on second hand source material to complement the views reflected by my informants. I will structure the analysis in
three parts, reflecting the three general categories I have identified in the coding process. The coding scheme can be revised and is presented in appendix 1. The underlying research questions for the conducted interviews bring logic to the discussion on each category. In the ending discussion I will show how the three posed research questions relate to, and can be said to produce knowledge about, the more general aim for this study, which is on the role and importance of alternative media in Guatemala. One should bear in mind the distinction made between alternative advocacy media, embodied in informants A and B, and alternative grassroots media represented by informants C, D, E and F.

3.1 Alternative and traditional media: What differs?

This dichotomous distinction between alternative and traditional media is to many to static and limited to describe and grasp the whole spectra of expressions and formats in the Guatemalan media landscape. However it is one commonly referred to and used to describe differences and to highlight what is turned against in how the traditional press work and what limitations their commercial business model comes with.

*Independence*

The lack of editorial and informational independence in the traditional newspapers for example, is a problem referred to by all informants interviewed for this study and becomes a clear marker for how their views on these matters are structured. The emphasis on independence cannot be sub rayed enough and could very well be one of the key issues to understand the very existence of alternative media and its aims. Talking about it in different ways and from different experiences, both informants in this study categorized as representing a more activist movement based media and the journalists working with alternative media in line with professional journalistic principles and media production, give account for how independence, or lack of it, is a common denominator the separates the different media. An important thing to bear in mind is the difference in necessity to permanently generate enough income to guarantee what the media set out to do and accomplish. Both Plaza Pública and Nómada, here representing the more firm journalistic media organizations, have bigger costs to cover as they pay their employees and collaborators whereas the other media interviewed for this study are often driven by voluntary efforts.

Informant A, representing alternative advocacy media Plaza Pública which is, according to him, editorially but not administratively independent as they are financed by a university, but absolutely free to touch upon subjects in line with the basic principles and directions of investigation set up by
the vice rectory when first launching in 2011. In Plaza Pública they are autonomous and free to, within the lines of investigation […]“of which we are absolutely convinced, we have absolute capacity of decision and nobody outside of this editorial staff sees any text before they are published” […] (Informant A).

The modes of financing are tightly intertwined with how certain medias independence is viewed by the informants. The fact that most media, mass- and traditional, are constituted by private companies with a commercial logic, which makes them susceptible to economic interest more than anything else. Informant A again;

But the majority of the media are subject to economic powers, powers much stronger than them. Either because of the publicity aspect or other forms of income. The majority are publicity-wise connected to the elite and ideologically much more aligned.

He highlights that the fact that Plaza Pública has no publicity and has no commercial financing is a guarantee for independence to print the stories they want on the topics they find interesting and necessary to meet the goals set up by the media in its conception.

As a contrasting example he compares to when before working for a media whose income depended to 75 per cent on publicity. According to Informant A it was evident that some things were just not possible to publish:

If certain interests were affected there was an immediate censorship. Sometimes it was the interests of the companies paying for publicity and sometimes it was the interests of business owners’ friends with the owner.

But I do know that one way of punishing a media that dared publish was to draw back big publicity contracts.

Informant B (alternative advocacy media) representing Nómada has a somewhat similar view on the traditional medias lack of independence due to modes of finance and what differs among them. Nómada represents a model in construction trying to assure economic independence through public associates, grants from international development agencies, crowd funding and publicity etc. This gives them […]“a bit more of a margin for independence than one sole advertiser for example” (Informant B).

Giving his description of the traditional Guatemalan media, he thinks they could be independent if they wanted to, that they have the resources, but that the big media also have political interests and are sometimes paid by the politicians (Informant B). That, for example, is something reacted against by Informant A, who strongly perceive their role as one producing content that stimulates a thinking process, action and reaction from the readers, rather than dictating orders to the congress and government as, according to him, the other newspapers do (Informant A). This brings us closer to what goals and aims alternative media have in Guatemala, which will be discussed in further detail later on.
Economic independence means different things for different alternative media as their structure will influence in costs and challenges. The pressure on Nómada and Plaza Pública to have constant financial means to cover expenses is obviously greater than what it is on activist media relying on the individual and collective efforts of their voluntary collaborators. Some see this as a guarantee for independence and not being silenced by greater powers.

Informant C (grassroots media) representing the opinion-based blog El Salmón, thinks they are differentiated by not depending on a business owner or the likes of one to access the space they use. [...] "since we aren’t getting paid, in other words, if you stop writing for El Salmón it is because you are tired or bored, its your decision, not one of the collective". For the sake of context I feel the need to point out that this was said making reference to the letting go of some 35 workers and reporters from Prensa Libre, Guatemala’s biggest daily newsgroup, most of who considered to be more progressive than that particular medias stance in politics. Informant F (grassroots media) makes allusion to the same event and calls it a “battle against freedom of expression” (Informant F). This in some ways highlights what they perceive as different in relation to traditional media; one side silencing voices questioning the status quo and the other struggling to make them heard.

From the perspective of Prensa Comunitaria, informant D makes a connection, from a grassroots media perspective, between economic dependence and an imposed media agenda. She sees them as independent, free from economic restraints and the imposed media order of the economical elite (Informant D).

Informant E representing Centro de Medios Independientes (CMI) develops some similar ideas on economic independence emphasising the lack of economic responsibility with external parts as insurance as well as the voluntary contributions by its members. Emphasising also the experience of “breaking the economic scheme in which we are enveloped”, as a proof of that other ways of communicating and informing are possible, he touches upon the need for alternative media to be based on prefigurative politics as discussed in relation to Downing’s ideas on radical media in the introductory chapter of this thesis. Not depending on the model one wishes to change is then what could be said to ensure independence, in the views of CMI and informant E. Both them, Prensa Comunitaria and El Salmón live of the contributions of their collaborators, who all work with something else separately, and what money is needed to cover the costs are gathered or conceived collectively.

One could regard independence as a means to achieve goals rather than just viewing it as a guarantee for being able to say or print what you want to. But what would also seem connected to the views on editorial independence and freedom of expression is the anti stance on the common publicist idea that media should be neutral or “objective” to the reality it reflects. On the one hand this conflicts with my own views and approach to “reality” and “knowledge”, but it is also emphasised among the
interviewed informants for this study. There are several who can be interpreted to mean that these notions are somewhat empty as not at all what guarantees contrasting views but rather disclosing one’s position and starting point, actively taking responsibility for the published content, is what guarantees transparency rather than objectivity or neutrality. Speaking for Plaza Pública, informant A calls journalistic objectivity a myth that they do not believe in but emphasises instead not concealing information due to intellectual honesty (Informant A).

The notions are also questionable as alternative media, as treated and defined on the theoretical level for study, in its very conception must strive to change society in a direction that is more equitable and challenge existing power structures. Neutrality or objectivity then become rather hollow concepts as they are only used by the elites concentrating power and resources. Who sets the agenda and whose ideas prevail? Neutral to reality could then be seen as maintaining the status quo, conserving the existing hegemonic power structures and discourses, consent in Gramsci’s words, as they would seem to only reflect certain interests over others and marginalizing themes and groups in society. In the light of this discussion, Informant B, when talking about Nómada’s specific part to play; “We can contribute to that society advances to become more just, more feminist, more prosperous, more equal and freer. We don’t do neutral journalism”.

Comparing this statement with the view of La Cuerda for example, a media with a close connection to the social movements and a clear position, there are obvious similarities in spite of the differences they represent. In informant F’s words; “La Cuerda emerges as a highly particular media because of being feminist and that implies that La Cuerda comes out in the light with a clear political position.”

Both informant C and informant E notes how the so-called neutrality, according to them pretended by, the Guatemalan traditional media, opens up to and allows for hateful discourses in the name of diversity. They instead see how alternative media contribute by not [...] “tolerating racist, machista, or patriarchal contents that incites hate (Informant E) and by sharing a consensus on democratic values and respect for the human rights (Informant C).

It might be seen as surprising that the informants don’t want to ascribe to the otherwise so generalized journalistic principles of giving “neutral” or “objective” accounts of reality. Maybe especially where informants have a background as journalists rather than activists. Or maybe that is less surprising seeing as they themselves have experience from working with and for traditional media and thus have first hand experience of what is possible and what is not regarding what is published, said and thought. Having seen the factory of hegemonic reproduction from within obviously didn’t encourage their beliefs in the possibility of objective reporting so maybe they are the ones most in their right to question this inaction and affirmation of discriminatory structures.

Looking beyond their clear and outspoken agenda we can see that using transparency and consistency instead of objectivity is more generally referred to among alternative media as guiding principles to
ensure independence and credibility. That would give us some indications as of how the consulted activists and journalists perceive their role.

The independence of determining your own editorial lines, investigative directions, topics and narratives that is, according to all my informants, representative of their media and in stark contrast with the picture Gramajo paints of the relationship between economical- and political power and the mass media as discussed in the prior chapter. Informant A describes the Guatemalan system as concentrated. “Concentrated property and ideologically plane. Almost all the media move within a small confined space, never straying outside the given line”. According to him, the owners’ of the media need not even give orders or instructions on what to do or write about, as the system is well meshed and regulated so that the reporters don’t step out of line. Here the role of the alternative media and those reporting for that sector is perceived as a contrast, a different option that is freer to criticize or question, and that puts before not spoken about topics on the agenda and is thus changing discourse.

We can see that all informants express views in line with Atton’s categories of commercial and editorial independence. Editorially they all express independence even though that independence is used to express the views of movements in some cases. Like La Cuerda for example, where the media gives account for the views of the movement and the movement takes the form of feminist magazine. However, the same vulnerability expressed by the informants regarding traditional media’s relationship and dependence to commercial and political interests, making their independence questionable, could be said to exist for alternative media as well. There obviously exist an economical factor to being able to continue producing media content and thus there is a certain dependence to be recognized. This was discussed briefly with informant A expressing the financial dependence to the university and most other informants have mentioned the liberty in not having big expenses to cover for the sake of the media they represent. But there are costs to be covered, especially if alternative media is to grow both in size and professionalism, so their independence, what gives them credibility, could actually become threatened if their economical situation isn’t also in the future secured. This presents alternative media with a big challenge ahead.

**Structure**

What could be regarded in line with independence is the very structure these media operate on. Seeing as economic freedom from corporate logic and commercial interests is regarded as necessary for media independence, the alternative structure becomes interesting to shed some light on. Having already discussed modes of financing this will instead serve to have a look at what principles the alternative media wants to transmit through their model.
The four media here grouped as more activist and movement representative, or grassroots, all have different origins at different times but rise organically through collective action defending democratic principles.

That CMI is “multidisciplinary” is something which informant E stresses to generate a high quality in the work they do and produce. As the following quote on how he views CMI will reflect, the democratic structure of the media and organization is lifted out; “Mainly as a horizontal space in the decision making regarding the organization” (Informant E). This is highlighted to give a sense of what a democratic structure means to them, an exception to the “normal” organization of the media that is based on profit and vertical hierarchy. Thus, in the structure of organization, what CMI show us is to counter the existing perceptions on which hegemonic power rest.

El Salmón arose from people using twitter as a means to create tendency and counter what was seen as the hegemonic views of the media denying the genocide on Mayan people during the armed conflict. They then managed to get together and create a media platform where […] “those who write are those who govern that media” (Informant C). Invoking democratic principles in other ways, making the media accessible and indeed a platform for deliberate and reflexive communication, informants shared views on the difficulties to put in to practice. The use of the Internet to host a media platform in itself comes with many possibilities to create forums for debate, as it can be made accessible in whole new ways. Accepting commentaries and critique on the published material and articles is hardly anything unique for alternative media seeing as most traditional printed media in Guatemala is now on the World Wide Web with their own commentary fields and forums. Taking it a step further though, Plaza Pública sometimes build on those commentaries and invite commentators to develop their ideas or even start writing for them (Informant A). Through a couple of examples, Informant A suggests that having a structure that permits this kind of reflexive communication is what can constitute Plaza Pública in a real debate forum, a public sphere, where people are acknowledged as intelligent beings and made possible to participate at the same time as stimulating a diversified media climate. Having recruited people on the basis of their Facebook posts or tweets for example; he argues that they are letting up a space for opinion that in traditional media is normally reserved for people already in situations of power and influence (Informant A). According to Australian media activist Matthew Arnison, the very essence of media power is in the division between producer and consumer of stories (Couldry and Curran, 2003:42). This would then lead us to believe that by democratizing the access to telling stories as described above, one is in fact questioning the modes of production and the structures media power build on.

Seeing as there is a close connection between some of these media and grassroots movements fighting for specific causes, it is hardly surprising that an effort is made to try an open up spaces for a wider array of voices and topics represented in the media. Drawing on Jakubowicz’s accounts from, and observations on, polish dissident press, Atton describes how that […] “when groups and individuals
are radicalized they tend to become communicators in their own right, establishing autonomous media, or information seekers, eager to seek out media giving expression for their views and experience” (Atton, 2002:80).

This relates to what narratives and discourses are being presented by alternative media in relation to their aims and goals, which will be discussed in further detail in the next section.

To summarize, I have in this section discussed some of the factors that differentiate alternative and traditional media by looking mainly at independence and structure. Independence is most commonly viewed as the integrity won from not relying on, or being governed by, commercial and economic interest. Independence is related what possibilities exist of speaking out the truths one wants but also on the organizational structure of the media. Structure itself can sometimes be said to be part of the counter hegemonic idea as alternative media provides us with alternative modes of production.

### 3.2 Purpose and aims of alternative media

As the six informants represent different media that was chosen on the basis of representing something unique, not identical with the others, more attention will have to be made to the specifics of each case.

Starting where they differ, the intentions behind every media can be connected, to some extent, to the format of the publication. El Salmón for example, which is in its essence a site publishing opinion based articles, has a recognized objective that is to fundamentally persuade. “Persuade through political opinion and also through cultural and artistic opinion that we sustain with the elements that give life to our columns” (Informant C, grassroots media). This would suggest an identified necessity, on behalf of those integrating the blog, to create a platform of political opinion that doesn’t follow the scheme of traditional media nor presents the views and opinions found elsewhere. Whether or not that is the case is difficult for us to say or even speculate about, seeing as this study is focused on the perceived role and importance by the very people working with alternative media.

In the views of informant F, La Cuerda could be seen to have both the purpose to, to some extent, persuade readers in certain directions on certain topics, but mostly to generate critical views and values by providing readers with different perspectives and stories.

This is our fundamental objective in this life; Collaborate so that there exists a critical multitude of people capable of understanding and criticizing the system and of presenting more emancipatory political propositions. That there can exist a more rational, less destructive economy. (Informant F)
Also mentioning that they want to see a change in mentality so that people actually have access to different ideas, this highlights the centrality of providing views outside of the hegemonic discourse as a way to contest existing media power.

Informant E describes CMI's main objectives as following:

*Provide information and analysis to be able to contribute to the public opinion with a more ample and critical view of reality. Strip and evidence the unjust relations of power and exploitation. Strengthen and make visible the communitarian struggles and those of the social movements to be able to contribute to them. Generate the communicational and informational spaces so that the communities and peoples can express their analysis and interpretations with their own voices.*

Exactly what this consists of will be given more attention as I try to give account for what narratives, stories and discourses alternative media intend to contribute with. What is here above expressed is in my views more contributions to an existing order rather than a complete questioning of it and a will to replace it with something else, or as Williams put it, *alternative* rather than *oppositional*. A clear reference can also be made to Traber’s description of grassroots media’s embodiment of alternative media values seeing as the content is produced by those who’s concerns they represent (Atton, 2002:13).

Speaking on behalf of Nómada, informant B presents some grander ambitions when striving for influence in public debate and social life:

*In its conception, Nómada’s idea is not to be alternative but to in some moment become hegemonic, to be mainstream so that our visions and ideas on journalism and the country are read by more people.*

Becoming hegemonic, or setting the agenda, is quite different from otherwise, and in comparison, quite humble ideas of empowering the public and marginalized groups in the media by contributing with tools for a more critical view of society and the social world. According to informant A, the idea behind Plaza Pública is to help create a critical citizenry. He explains;

*We are not interested in convincing the readers with cheap tricks and we don’t want them to appropriate our opinions. We want them to have access to all the elements necessary to judge what is going on, something that tend to be very complex and without any easy interpretation.*

In contrast to looking to themselves setting the agenda, Plaza Pública would seem to strive for creating the possibilities for people to themselves act and bring change to the table. They want to stimulate action by targeting the citizenry as a whole and hoping to reach out to people potentially politically active (Informant A). This by doing what they call *profound journalism* that doesn’t stop at investigative journalism but strives to, through deeper more thorough explanations, “connect the dots”, so to speak.

On those topics of social inquiry that don’t necessarily reveal anything extremely new or unknown, but that seek to contextualize them in a different manner and connect elements that weren’t clearly connected. In
other words what we strive to do is to give new or different explanations, but always explanations and not just news, not just description of information, but explanations to the big social phenomenon.

In a different format, and from a less pronounced starting point and political position than La Cuerda, views intersect between what both informant A (alternative advocacy media) and F (grassroots media) deem as necessary for the Guatemalan society and citizenry as a whole. This is in line with Traber’s, as mentioned above, descriptions of similarities and differences represented by alternative advocacy media and grassroots media.

Having here discussed the more general notions of their aims, the next part will focus on those contributions thought to reflect such strivings.

**Narratives, stories and discourse: What’s new?**

Having consulted and interviewed six different alternative media centres regarded as progressive, but at the same time differing in many ways interesting for this study, an ample spectre of views concerning the differences in content between alternative and traditional media, as well as between different alternative actors, is noticeable and will hopefully gain understanding here. Common denominators can be found, especially regarding underlying values and stories they want to transmit and hope to reproduce. Due to the closeness between the different meanings of the perceptions of the informants given account for, in some cases the contributions by alternative media regarding these matters will intertwine with what impact they sometimes can be argued to have, something that will be treated in further detail in the next section.

Looking again at what has come out of the semi-structured interviews where the informants were allowed to develop their ideas freely on the topics I wanted to include in this study, some clear perceived contributions to the Guatemalan media climate can be found regarding stories, narratives and discourse. Various accounts from these interviews suggest that the different alternative voices have contributed to changing the media agenda by lifting stories and problems in new ways and from angles not priorly seen. What possible impact, or what such stories can be said to have brought with them regarding possible effect will be discussed further on.

Having identified a need for, or maybe rather an absence of topics and perspectives, in what existing media had to offer, Plaza Pública contributed with a progressive perspective and voice among “loud-mouthed” conservatives and libertarians dominating the media (Informant A). Some of the themes mentioned in the interview have clear connections to the deliberate democratic processes informant A also mentioned as an objective of Plaza Pública to help stimulate.
Transitional justice, poverty, inequality, topics related to non-heteronormative identities, the scrutiny of the economical elite and their relationship to politics often corrupt. These are the topics that were a bit marginalized and for us crucial so we took them and put them on the agenda. Afterwards other media have started doing it, including those who didn’t before. (Informant A)

Informant B stresses the overseeing role between media as one being healthy and necessary. Overseeing in the sense that published stories and facts don’t go unquestioned and unrevised so that the big media can’t go about their business printing stories and acting with impunity (Informant B). This in turn would then have an impact within other powerful strata of society as economic, political and media power is tightly intertwined as shown earlier by Gramajo.

In informant B’s opinion, this overseeing by independent media can change the imaginary of the powerful elites that their actions go unpunished and unrevealed. This perceived role is also interesting bearing in mind Couldry and Curran’s description of alternative media as challenging concentrations of power as described in the theoretical introduction of this study.

Maybe the clearest example of how hegemonic discourse is challenged and forms of narrating questioned is looking to the feminist perspective and analysis of Guatemalan society. Without entering too much in a discussion on the dominance of patriarchal society in our minds and conceptions of the world, having a clear stance as feminist, as is the example of La Cuerda, the very idea is to question existing power structures and discourse. Their analysis

*Many of the concepts that we let out of the wardrobe so to speak, are today more current, used daily and normal. Terms like patriarchy, misogyny and sexual harassment. It is not that we invented them but with the change of atmosphere they spread to other sectors of society.*

Here one could argue that Informant F gives an example of how their use of language and presenting new narratives and topics has lead to a noticeable change that spreads even outside the magazine and feminist debate and had impact on a societal level. She argues that where traditional media analyse issues of socio-political character they do it from corporate perspective whereas La Cuerdas’s contribution is to analyse the country from different feminist perspectives taking in to account their own views on politics and economics for example. Of the media here studied, La Cuerda is perhaps radical in the sense since they present a clear option for change in society more than just describing it or critiquing it. Their means to counter the hegemonic patriarchal power structures is through words and actions as they are also a movement.

A prevailing sensation is how little trust the informants have in the possibilities of diversity in traditional medias reporting and depicting of society, something that they as alternative media are struggling to visualize and amplify. On topics of social taboo for example, like sexuality, informant F argues that the intention and role of La Cuerda is to call things by their proper names so that people
understand their meaning. It is a sort of counter reaction to a traditional way of not speaking about certain things and that only furthers and enhances the taboos.

As well as contributing with new stories and narratives, lifted out in some cases is the importance of contributing with new perspectives on topics that are being lifted and discussed in other media as well. From the point of view of La Cuerda and informant F this can be true in situations of how violence against women are portrayed, victimization of women or what eco-political models are good for the country etc. What becomes recurring is how dominant the hegemonic discourse is viewed and how necessary it is for them as movement and a media to continuously question the official version. As informant F claims, one of the things that has sparked the most protest and movement from human rights organizations, indigenous and campesino movements etc, is mining and the effects of it. It is something widely known in Guatemala through endless commercial and publicity campaigns by the large corporations and a never ending support from congress and government claiming the benefits of extracting mineral resources. But maybe the biggest part to play is the one by the media and it is one questioned by for instance La Cuerda who sees this model as not something bringing development but rather problems to affected communities (Informant F). Informant D giving her views on the contribution of Prensa Comunitaria stresses the importance of countering mass medias depiction of marginalized groups in society showing the humane side of those fighting for their rights and not diminishing those suffering discrimination and exploitation.

*It’s about making visible the struggle of women. The campesina woman, the indigenous woman and all the women who are fighting for their right to a place in the decision-makings. [...] That is the role of Prensa Comunitaria; to go to the rural communities where traditional media don’t set foot and to show reality through investigative journalism.* (Informant D)

In relation to this is what voices, social demands or ideas are heard through these alternative grassroots media, as Traber put it. In the above quote there is a strong sense of further empowering the people thought to express themselves through this media and at the same time contributing to a growing critical consciousness, or *Conscientização* in the words of Freire. This has common denominators with the foundations and thoughts on citizen media as coined by Clemencia Rodríguez. In this specific case maybe not so much due to the involvement of marginalized groups in the production of media content but in transmitting an active practice of citizenship rights by marginalized- and made invisible, groups.

La Cuerda is a platform where people from the environmental movements, people in defence of their territories, women’s movements, human rights activists and indigenous movements are heard as well as the lifting of LGBT related issues according to informant F. To contrast that there would be limitations as to topics, informant C lifts out what isn’t and will not be heard or published by El Salmón as a contrast to what then could and would be to expect in the Guatemalan mass media.
There are no fascists, no genocide deniers and no backwards conservatives at El Salmón” (Informant F).

What could also be interesting to look at is the background of those constituting these alternative media. In all cases, both in the more professional journalistic media like Plaza Pública and Nómada and the more activist movement media here represented by El Salmón, CMI, La Cuerda and Prensa Comunitaria, the people who work with and produce content bring different perspectives judging from the wide array of prior, or on the side, areas of expertise. Not all being formed in the same schools or logic of journalistic education is maybe something worth bearing in mind. Ranging from graphic designers, photographers, hackers, journalists investigators, reporters, artists, musicians, intellectuals to historians, social communicators, political scientists, and the list goes on, the alternative media in Guatemala would seem to hold many aspects of social life in store.

In this section I have more closely discussed some of the main purposes and aims expressed by alternative media and that I was able to identify from the interviews with my informants. Making a connection between aims and contributions by alternative media to the public debate and society, we have also gotten an insight to what the informants lift and prioritize with their role in the media landscape. Contributing on the one hand with form, new topics, stories untold, we have also been able to identify the need for new perspectives not offered by traditional media on all sorts of topics. The section on purposes and aims and what concrete contributions are being made, is closely related to next that will deal with the impact that the informants perceive alternative media is having.

3.3 Perceived Impact

This part of the analysis does not in any way pretend to measure possible impact or outcome of alternative medias role in Guatemala, but rather present the informants own views on what they find important about the influence of alternative media. This in turn to give us a better idea of what is hoped to achieve and what in the views of alternative media is necessary to change as well as to contribute with. Some of the “impacts” discussed in terms of narratives and contributions will not be repeated here in a thorough manner but should be born in mind. For instance, the contributions discussed when giving account for La Cuerda’s views on how certain topics are spoken about, what words are now used and who gets to pronounce them, could just as well be seen as a possible impact the magazine has had in society. This is a somewhat thin line and again, this separation between categories or concepts serves more the purpose of facilitating the text for the reader than to highlight differences in content.

41
With real difficulties for the informants to speculate in these matters, as their wanted impact isn’t one expressed as measurable or quantifiable, but rather qualitative often in the sense of aiding a change of conscience among the citizenry, we can rely on some indicators to be able to discuss the matter.

Connected to contributions to public debate described in the prior section, and something that various mention is, the value of when stories and narratives from alternative media gets picked up, or as some would say are forced to, by the mass media. Informant A mentions various times the different channels Plaza Pública have gotten access to share their analysis on topics of societal interest. According to him, due to the fact that they, as a relatively small and Internet based media, are not seen as competition by the big media, they get invited to share analysis for its profundity. This in turn has allowed them to be seen in radio and television with national coverage. According to informant H who monitors the media through DOSES, the standard norms in Guatemala are to ignore each other among different media and not pick up what is written elsewhere (informant H).

Informant C speaks of a possible chain reaction when referring to the importance of alternative medias efforts to put topics on the agenda. Specifically mentioning CMI and Prensa Comunitaria as media reminding the rest of the issues concerning the movements they represent. “The effort made from this perspective constituted an important mechanism to force the new digital media to not forget about the social and popular demands” (Informant C). Aided by each other then, could alternative media lift issues of otherwise marginalized groups and reach out to a wider audience?

This would, some might say, strategically go hand in hand with Raschke’s emphasis on the importance of visibility in the media; “A movement that doesn’t make it in to the mass media is non-existent” (Quoted in Couldry and Curran, 2003:17).

Perhaps more adequate to analyse from an outside perspective, informants G and H have some interesting contributions on the understanding of alternative medias role. On the specific case of Plaza Pública, informant G states:

“They gave us stories that weren’t being found elsewhere and they added depth in the stories that we might have heard of their existence, but not the profundities nor causes or consequences. There were subjects that you wouldn’t touch. Going after those in power was prohibited and even dangerous. Not only the military or political power but also the economical power and even that of social organizations who survive in the public space doing what they want”.

On the same note, informant H recognizes their importance in adding to the general knowledge through their investigations on corruption and public officials. What informant G really is saying as quoted above is quite remarkable if taken as a truth. He implies that alternative media was the first to really review the power by defying risks and given, albeit informal, norms. If so, seeing as the
progress referred to be recent, taking place during the last few years, the general democratic deficit and limits to transparency in government must be of massive proportions.

Judging from the DOSES report released and presented during my time of field work in Guatemala, the impact according to the figures would be minimal in the sense that a very limited amount of people recur to the alternative media discussed in this thesis for political information. However, one conclusion drawn in that report is the growing usage of the Internet and of digital platforms (DOSES 2). Still, as informant H points out along with other informants touching on the subject, the access to the internet and digital media is till limited in Guatemala and the technological breach between the city and the countryside to mention one thing, is still of massive proportions. Where, in many places electricity is not to be taken for granted, access to the internet and online platforms, even through smartphones, will not be of, to say the least, generalized use. To me this raises questions on the possibilities of democratizing the media as expressed a number of times as some of the communities now being heard through alternative media might not yet have access to the published content. Going back to Traber’s notion of grassroots media and its usefulness to the communities that produce it, I dare say that this would imply having access to the published material. The same would go for Rodriguez’s concept of citizen media that adds with the empowering dimension of media in the hands of civil society. Traber based his concepts and experiences on case studies in communities in parts of Africa where mass media didn’t penetrate, not so different from the situation in many parts of Guatemala. What this shows us on the one hand, somewhat paradoxically maybe, is that the advantages of using the internet as a platform in terms of reaching a wider audience and the quick accessibility could actually turn in to disadvantages, seeing as communities risk being excluded from accessing the information they participate in producing. This would have to be countered in some ways if alternative media is to be more democratic and not risk turning into channels of information for the currently small urban middle class or elites.

Some of the informants touch upon this subject and on how they’re trying to counter this technological breach but the problem remains and continues to generate certain segregation as informant E puts it. Whilst the access isn’t democratized, neither will the usage be able to increase much. Returning to some of the concepts and ideas on what constitutes different types of alternative media, access would seem to be of central importance to fulfil the purposes of engaging citizen or community media but maybe not necessarily to counter hegemonic discourse. It will depend in the end on the intended target group of the media to reach and not only who to listen to.

With some difficulties, due to lack of access to demographic data on those who do get their information from the alternative media here studies, in speculating in possible impact among readers and the public, the subject is of interest as the readers are an indispensable part of the equation. Both
informant A and B who when consulted did have some idea on the characteristics of their readers thanks to polls on the website, the general picture that is given is of a rather privileged public with higher education and the means access the information. Access the information should be understood both in terms of having access to a computer and the internet but also the sufficient knowledge and time to be able to approach the articles. Giving his point of view from an outside perspective, Informant G calls some of the production of these alternative media for “elite journalism” referring to the complexity of the texts. With elite however he means any kind of elite, educational, social, religious or political (Informant G). Informant H believes that the possible coverage these media can have in present time is minimal referring to technological limitations but also to Google statistics on the most visited websites where our alternative media don’t come close to the most visited. On the other hand, this shouldn’t be to surprising or concerning for that matter, given the views expressed by the informants on purposes, aims and wanted impact.

One of, what I find, more interesting things expressed and disclosed in the interview material are some reflections informant A makes on where impact can be said to lay as this in its turn reflects to some extent the coverage some alternative media then has managed to establish. Bearing in mind the expressed goal to reach the citizenry and stimulate the creation of a critical multitude, Plaza Pública got indications that they were breaking through even to the dominant decision-making layers of society. This as outspokenly marked orientated digital news site, and funded by Guatemala’s business sector conglomerate, República.gt was allegedly created with the intention to compete with and counter Plaza Pública, as they were said to be each other’s “ideological adversaries” (Informant A). This could tell us something about the experienced impact alternative media is having, as dominant sectors in society would seem to fell threatened, but more so it gives us some indications on a polarized situation where little confidence exist between groups. The importance alternative media might have can also be seen as the influential economical and political elite finds it necessary to try and pressurize, in this case, Plaza Pública in certain directions (Informant A). Their own interpretation of that sort of pressure, beyond the normal exercise of power, seem to be that their work is being felt in the sectors of society that gain from the inequality alternative media in turn is trying to combat. Those sectors reacting, showing signs of fear even is interpreted as an indicator that objectives are being fulfilled and the citizenry reached. This is confirmed by informant G who states that the powerful’s first response is to try and “undermine credibility”. But interestingly in this situation is that the hegemonic power also responds by trying to compete by extending their influence into, what they then might see, is the alternative media sphere. In other words, the counter hegemonic voices are being challenged on their own arena, so to speak, by the very institutionalized powers in society they try to contradict. Could we assume this as an impact and evidence of the importance of alternative media as even when the hegemonic elite has plenty of influence in the media and coverage there are needs to further establish such power? This does not make a publication like República.gt alternative however
if we are to stay true to actual debates among scholars and not just hollow our concepts just for the sake of including those left out. However it does put in to question whether or not this can lead to something else, something new since our understanding of alternative media is quite closely linked to specific platforms and modes of production etc. At the very least it tells us that there is more to be studied in a near future to better grasp the context in with counter hegemonic alternative media will operate in Guatemala.

In this last section on perceived impact I have discussed the views of the informants regarding what possible change and influence alternative media can be said to have. As impact isn’t seen in this case as something quantifiable no intentions have been made to try to measure but rather look at indicators of when alternative media breaks through with information and has an effect. We have seen how informants believe that alternative media contributes through form, narratives and safeguarding transparency as well as provoking reaction from sectors of society that embody hegemonic power. To problematize further, this section has also seen the discussion on the possible readership and the difficulties in the Guatemalan context.

4. Concluding notes

The overall aim of this study has been to, given a specific context and case, shine some light on the importance of, and the role to play by, alternative media in Guatemala. This by posing research questions aimed at getting to know and understanding the perceptions of journalists and activists as well as their purposes and aims with what they’re doing. In the introductory chapter of this thesis I presented some of the existing theory on alternative media and highlighted some scholars ideas that I have used for the sake of debate throughout my own text and analysis. On the basis of three categories identified from the interview material, I have presented a discussion aimed at, from my perspective, answering the posed research questions. These categories consist of what makes alternative media special and differ from other media, the purposes and aims of alternative media and their contributions and perceived impact in Guatemalan society. By comparing views and analysing opinions with the help from external literature and experts, I hope to have given account for and accomplished what I set out to do. What’s missing now is some further discussion to summarize in connection to our questions.

Thought to reflect some general opinions and answers, as well as the comparative methodological approach by dividing informants in two subcategories of alternative advocacy media and alternative
grassroots media, this first research question have been discussed throughout the analysis. My analysis is based on perceptions expressed in the interviews and does not, nor did I set out to, present us with neither hard facts nor definitive truths. But the general idea, visualized from the analysis, is a perceived role of great importance to a transparent media sector that promotes democratic development and progress. We have seen that in every case, values that reflect a strong emphasis on respecting human rights have been promoted as far more important and guiding than traditional ideas on journalistic neutrality and objectivity. To different extent of course, but the idea of creating alternative spaces, not subscribing to official hegemonic discourse seen and sanctioned in mass media, and thus countering the hegemonic power structures is a highly present sense of being and doing. What we have seen is that alternative media in fact isn’t, or doesn’t represent, a hegemonic vision of society or the media. They do not limit the content to imagined objective information that does not question the power structures in society but invite citizens to take control and action of their lives as political subjects.

The discussion on independence becomes central when talking about the perceived role of alternative media, as it is, according to what came out of the interviews, one of the fundamental differences that separate them from traditional media. The role of alternative media then being to offer discourses, information and values, expressed in a truly independent way and free from the constraints of the interests of market powers. Given that freedom, alternative media is free to express, criticize and contemplate those things deemed important and marginalized in mass media. We have also seen an expressed role of amplifying the space of opinion in Guatemalan media, not only by lifting different topics or discourse but also by opening up the debate forums to a wider array of people.

Throughout the analysis there has been a maintained awareness on the categorization made to divide the interviewed alternative media into two subcategories: alternative advocacy media and alternative grassroots media. We have seen how they to some extent depend on different structures, something that will influence in their objectives and priorities. The clearest line to draw is probably when comparing format and structure but mostly the prevailing or absence of rigid journalistic principles. An example of where many concur is discussing aims and objectives. To stimulate and help creating a critical readership and active citizens is referred to by several informants independently of the subcategory they have been placed in. If such a fundamental thing as objective doesn’t differ, then what does? In the production of content and the publication of the very same, I would say one key difference seen in this analysis is that while many express that they contribute to the public debate by, for example, publishing stories by voices priory not heard, there still prevails a huge difference in whether or not they identify with the movements or social actors now been given a space in the media. The ones labelled grassroots media throughout this analysis express a much clearer purpose of spreading the views and concerns of popular movements and activists etc. In comparison, the alternative advocacy media has a stronger focus on profound investigative journalism that does
consider and give account for some of the same stories but from a completely different perspective and not by reproducing their views as one’s own. An interesting notion is that some informants see alternative media as mutually assisting and pushing each other to lift certain stories and social demands considered invisible, in the analysis referred to as a chain reaction. A way to summarize would be to say that having taken into account the views expressed by the informants, a clear role of alternative media is to push marginalized stories and topics so that they get a bigger spreading and make it into a wider range of media. This in turn fills the part of reshaping the visions of society as groups and societal problems are no longer invisible. Again, reiterating an existing division between advocacy- and grassroots media that will shape the way a topic is talked about and the prevailing or absence of contrasting views.

We have also through this analysis seen the expressed aims of contributing to society, and maybe more so societal change, by changing the very concept of journalism in Guatemala. Who produces it, who reads it, talks about or hears it are all being redefined as alternative media seek to counter the hegemony that gives power to some and limits power for others. Values are often expressed as in need of taking a more central place in the production of media and reproduction of ideas and contributing to a more democratic and including society is a generalized desire. Alternative medias specific contribution to strengthening democracy and aiding in the process of consolidating it hasn’t been given its own clear space in the analysis but rather been discussed in general terms on the topics related to it by the informants. It would however be an interesting concept to delve a little further into seeing as indicators from this study point at alternative media having an important part to play when it comes to viewing and reviewing the state and government and thus contributing to society’s knowledge on important matters. Taking into account both informants representing alternative media and the media experts also interviewed for this study, a reshaping of the media’s way of relating to the political and economical power is taking place and that will, I find it safe to say, in some way or another have an impact on the status of Guatemalan democracy. The views presented in the analysis on the contributions by alternative media and the impact they are said to have had shows us that a general perception is that alternative media contributes to public knowledge and works empowering for society by revealing what used to be kept in the dark and untouched.

Where the privileges of having access to the media, through different platforms and through educational preparation, skills among others, have been referred to and discussed, what hasn’t been discussed so much in detail are the privileges of even being able to produce media content. The idea to question the hegemonic accounts of reality and social life is of course central as is the questioning of the actors contributing or even defending such status quo. Thinking mainly of the grassroots media activists who can’t count on any economical compensation for all the hard work and all the time that is put down, somewhere this implies being able to actually take all that time and energy from doing
something else. Knowing something about rural Guatemalan conditions at least, I dare say that such possibilities are not representative of more than a very select few as structural discrimination on everything from ethnicity and gender to geography will no doubt work its magic in preventing more inclusion in society. Who then has the possibilities to actually devote oneself to alternative media and actively countering the power structures in society? Seeing as even the alternative sector questioning existing foundations of media power and discourse will in turn gain influence and help shape and form the contents of the media and public debate, an interesting extension to this study could maybe be to shed some more light on the privileges of agenda setting.

Closely related, a mission set out with this study was also to dig a bit deeper into the expressed contributions by alternative media regarding narratives and issues. This has repeatedly been discussed throughout the analysis and while many of the informants and investigated media express similar views and opinions, they do not always make way for the same topics. Of course, seeing as the grassroots media here portrayed were selected for bringing different views and experiences to the table, their connections to specific movements fighting for specific causes will also differ. Through the informants we have seen how some topics aren't necessarily “new” per se in the sense that they are completely left out by traditional mass media, but are, with the contribution of alternative media, described in different manners, from different angles and with different interests at heart. Others are and were considered to be completely missing and limiting public debate. La Cuerda represented a feminist narrative that was argued to have changed conceptions and ideas on both women rights issues and how discriminatory structures and practices are being named. The demands of popular nature, indigenous movements, women movements, poor sectors of society are viewed as having been lifted through alternative media and described as people with rights rather than as victims or troublemakers. The general idea of seems then to be one of presenting reality with new dimensions, making impossible the negation of certain ways of seeing such reality and of contributing to inclusion and critical awareness about power structures. What is maybe, judging from what is learned through this text, the major importance of alternative media in Guatemala is one of building new knowledge of the social world by showing that other ways are possible. Countering the hegemonic, the ruling structure that seems to exclude so many in so many different ways, is going against an imposition that exists even within ourselves if we are to again draw on Gramsci.

Or to sum up and for the sake of me not clinging on to having the last word in this constructed piece of reality, informant C explains the metaphor that made it to the title of this thesis:
“In other words, swimming against the current that tries to impose a homogenous version of the national reality. That is the version and vision we are trying to counter.”
References

Books


Guerrero, Manuel & Marquez Ramirez, Mireya (red.) (2014). Media systems and communication policies in Latin America [Elektronisk resurs].


**Articles**


Garcia-Ruano, Karina, Alejandro Pacheco, & Dessiree Suazo. "Latin America| The Use of Digital Media for Social Mobilization in Marginalized Communities: The Case of a Mayan


Van Aelst, Peter, and Stefaan Walgrave. "New media, new movements? The role of the internet in

**Websites**


**Reports**


## Appendix

### Coding scheme

#### General categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Differences among media</th>
<th>2. Purpose and aims</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Independence:</td>
<td>Narratives, stories and discourse:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Media Structure</td>
<td>- Profound journalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- External influence</td>
<td>- Progressive voice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Reflection power</td>
<td>- Marginalized thematic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and ownership</td>
<td>- Contribute with content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commercial interests</td>
<td>- Honour and transparency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Publicity</td>
<td>- Lack of information on topics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Modes of financing</td>
<td>- Unique contributions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure:</td>
<td>- Become hegemonic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Horizontal structure</td>
<td>- Equitable society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Vertical structure</td>
<td>- Social aims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Commercial interests</td>
<td>- Strategic goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Economical structure</td>
<td>- Counter hegemonic discourse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Principles</td>
<td>- Role of alternative media</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alternative/Traditional:</td>
<td>- Critical citizenry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Competition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Clear positioning</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Discourse</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Founding principles</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3. Perceived impact

- Value the reader
- Contribute to democratic progress
- Untold stories
- Pressurize other media
- Stimulate thought and action
- Pressure media
- Influence in power
- Spread to mass media
- Challenge interests
- Pressure from above
- Response
- External reaction
- Reaction of elites
- Change in reporting
- Societal impact
- Readership
- Limitations in coverage and readership